

(Washington, DC)— Representatives Gwen Moore (D-Wisc.) and Andre Carson (D-Ind.) today introduced the AFTERSchools Meals Act of 2009, a bill that would give all schools the authorization to provide suppers through either the school meals program or the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

“Times are tough for American families, so tough that children are going hungry because their parents have lost their jobs, or are working very long hours at more than one job and just barely scraping by,” Congresswoman Moore said. “Between 2000 and 2007, the country has seen a 40 percent increase in the number of people living in the hungriest households. This is very troubling, particularly for children who can’t get the nutritious meals that growing boys and girls really need.

“Children who eat three healthy meals a day are so much more successful in the classroom. We need our students learning reading, writing, math and science – not distracted because they’re not getting enough to eat. If our public schools are going to prepare children to excel, we’ve got to do everything we can inside and outside the classroom to make that success possible. By making sure our kids can eat three meals a day, the AFTERSchool Meals Act will take our students one step closer to achieving excellence.”

“Children should never have to go hungry because economic hardship prevents their parents from purchasing nutritious food,” Congressman Carson said. “Tragically, as the unemployment rate continues to increase, this is exactly what is happening in households across our country. Everyday, millions of children fail to reach their full academic and personal potential because they do not receive the meals they so desperately need.

“Today, thousands of children already see the benefit of afterschool meal programs — benefits that are unfortunately not yet available to most public school students. That’s why I am so proud to join Congresswoman Moore in introducing this legislation which will give public schools the resources they need to begin providing the nutritious meals that will equip our young people to perform to their best potential.”

Each day, 3.1 million children receive nutritious meals and snacks through the Child and Adult Food Care Program. However, under current law, only 10 states are authorized through the CACFP “At-Risk” After School Care Program to provide suppers to children 18 and younger.

The AFTERSchool Meals Act would make all states eligible to participate in the full afterschool meal program. Schools could receive reimbursement for serving supper through either the CACFP or through the Russell School Lunch/Breakfast Program. Senators Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) and Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) have introduced similar legislation in the Senate.

“We have the shared responsibility to feed children supper when they are in our care at the dinner hour,” said Sherrie Tussler, Executive Director of Milwaukee’s Hunger Task Force. “With one in four of our children hungry, the need is so obvious. We call on individual citizens to voice their need for this federal program to work for our children as it does in other states. Why not Wisconsin? Why not Milwaukee? The time has come to help our children through child nutrition re-authorization.”

Congresswoman Moore has been a leading advocate for ensuring that needy children have access to three nutritious meals every day. Earlier this week, she introduced legislation with Senators Herb Kohl and Russ Feingold of Wisconsin that would increase funding for universal school breakfast programs in schools across the country.

The Student Breakfast and Education Improvement Act of 2009 would provide grants, awarded on a competitive basis, to schools with at least 65 percent of students who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch. The legislation encourages creative breakfast programming, which includes serving breakfast during the school day, incorporating local foods into breakfasts and providing nutritional education.

Several states and school districts have already implemented breakfast expansion programs with great success. Milwaukee Public Schools, in partnership with the Milwaukee Hunger Task Force, last year began a pilot program that provides free breakfast to all students in more than 60 participating schools.

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